



To: House Education

From: Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: January 18, 2023

Subject: Worker Shortage PreK-12

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director the Vermont Principals' Association.

The person generally the most involved in the actual nuts & bolts of the hiring process for support staff and teachers within a given school is the principal. Typically this includes: setting up committees for interviews, checking references, conducting interviews, developing criteria for interview committees and making recommendations to the Superintendent as to the preferred candidate for a given position.

Principals report almost unanimously that hiring now is much more difficult than it was pre pandemic. A few key points:

- A quick check on School Spring as of yesterday shows 1056 open jobs K-12 in Vermont, this includes all school employee jobs. This is a crazy number especially when we consider we are not in July or August!
 - https://www.schoolspring.com/find/vermont_teaching_jobs_in_vermont.cfm
- We are seeing support staff such as general paraeducators and individual student aides being pulled away from their assignments to cover classrooms so school can be held when teachers are absent. Huge issues with students not being able to access IEP services in some cases because there is simply no personnel available; the choice might be between allowing first graders to come to school today or providing one student with a required aide

- Where once 100's of teacher applications for elementary teaching positions would occur now dozens or less are common (higher paying districts). Poorer districts were once a dozen to two dozen applicants for these positions now single digits and sometimes no candidates at all
 - <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/fewer-people-are-getting-teacher-degrees-pre-p-programs-sound-the-alarm/2022/03#:~:text=That%20mirrors%20an%20overall%20decline.going%20into%20the%20teaching%20profession.>
- Substitute teachers are very hard to find - there is more money in retail positions in our service economy than schools can afford to pay for these positions. Even so, many schools are substantially increasing their rate of pay for substitute teachers and still have very few takers
 - <https://hechingerreport.org/more-than-a-warm-body-schools-try-long-term-solutions-to-substitute-teacher-shortage/>
- Principals and Assistant Principals are turning over at an incredible rate. A 31% principal turnover rate this year; highest ever in VT to my knowledge. The rate is usually around 20% which is way too high but the fact that we are up 11% more than in a normal school year is especially alarming.
 - <https://tuoipay.com/blog/school-principal-turnover/>
- The national beating up of public education and public educators across the country with the obsession to focus on test scores with No Child Left Behind and continuing with the policies of Race to the Top that usually measure superficial results and are not always aligned with the standards and outcomes we want for our students is driving people away from the profession. These tests in general do a fantastic job of correlating with socio-economic status. They also make billions of dollars for testing companies. There is no evidence that they support student instruction or learning overall. Additionally, the increased responsibility on school employees and public education to resolve or bandaid all of society's issues is exacerbating stress levels for school leaders and teachers. And finally, the political rhetoric that teachers are exposed to by extremist factions on both ends of the political spectrum make education less appealing to anyone considering the profession
 - Each post secondary educational institution in Vermont that has some historical context will tell you that the number of people looking at education as a profession has dropped dramatically in the last few decades with no positive end in sight
 - <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/05/us/teacher-prep-student-shortages-covid-crisis/index.html>

Potential School Workforce Solutions:

- Financial support/incentives for teachers who have a general license to pick up the special education endorsement. Encourage this - hardest position to find. Having classroom teachers with this endorsement and expertise will be more important in the post Act 173 world.
- Provide funding support to strengthen CTE Path to Education teaching
 - Especially incentivizes minority populations to become teachers
 - Students need to see themselves reflected in their teachers. This is critically important for our minority students in VT

- Waive licensure expenses for people moving from other states. If they have a license in another state make it easy for them to teach here
- Do an educator version of the Governor's \$10,000 remote worker concept - get educators to move here, stay a certain period of time in good standing and they collect the \$10,000
- 5 year retention bonus
 - Down payment toward a house for example
- Teacher funding support for home loans
 - Teachers often don't make enough money to get a house loan early in their careers. Owning a home makes it much more likely the educator will continue to live in VT. Remove banking regulations or subsidize these regulation thresholds to help young teachers become homeowners
- Incentivize paraeducators to go into teaching, pay for course work
- Provide financial support to mitigate or cover Peer Review Cost for those who need it
- Develop statewide training and support and a pipeline for the development of Behavior Interventionists
- Educator pension. Improve it if you can; if you can't improve it please leave it alone. Please do not go backwards. We already have the weakest educator pension in the region and one of the weakest in the nation. This is a real deterrent. When people compare Vermont's pay and pension benefits to our neighbors, especially New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut we are at a serious disadvantage
- Higher pay across the state. Could pass a law raising minimum annual teachers salaries and minimum hourly wages for support staff positions
- Encourage flexible schedules (locally collective bargaining will need to be the vehicle)
- Celebrate teachers - right now education is considered the solution for everything that is wrong in society. Our teachers are doing so much more than what they originally signed up for or expected these jobs would entail. Let's go out of our way as a state to thank our educators for all they do. Many educators do not feel valued - when people are not valued they don't tend to stay regardless of what vocation they are in
- Child Care support is needed for educators and support staff. Support staff often have to pay more in child care than their wages - many of these positions are staffed by individuals that are largely working simply for health insurance benefits for themselves and/or family
- Develop a State Loan Forgiveness program from VT Institutions for people who pursue education and stay in VT for a given amount of time
- Providing mental health supports our educators' needs for our students. Teachers are not mental health counselors and that is much of their job day-to-day. Schools cannot fix all of society's ills. We have student behavior manifesting in many violent behaviors because basic mental health needs are not being met; kids are on waiting lists for months at a time before getting service. These children come to school every day and schools work to meet their needs - but educators do not have the training or resources to provide what many of these children need. We have many educators leaving the field because they feel overwhelmed and unable to teach students because of the myriad and complexity of the issues students face every day emerging in the classroom

- Be a teacher in VT campaign AOE website and/or Dept. of Labor
 - Need to push this as a great place to teach
 - Real recruitment to bring teachers here
 - Use all of some of the suggestions above
 - This will take a legislative push, and AOE Push, and a push by the Governor.
Let's really make Vermont the education state by taking care of the needs of our children so we can build a better future for them and for our state